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THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

In

COLONIAL NEW HAMPSHIRE

By

EDGAR LEGARE PENNINGTON, S. T. D.

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The Church of England in New Hampshire

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Edgar Legare Pennington, S. T. D.

When Martin Pring proceeded to the Piscataqua, in 1603, with his flagship of fifty tons and his barque of twenty-six tons, it is probable that the services of the English Church were held in the region now known as New Hampshire. The first explorers of America usually carried chaplains with them, and provisions were made for the religious needs of the sailors. The precarious nature of such expeditions made the adventurers mindful of their need of divine protection. Captain John Smith visited the New Hampshire coast in 1614; and that celebrated pioneer has written in a picturesque manner of the Virginia colonists and their worship.

On the 10th of August, 1622, the Council for New England granted to Sir Ferdinando Gorges and Captain John Mason "all that part of the mainland in New England, lying upon the sea-coast betwixt the rivers of Merimack and Sagadahock and to the furtherest heads of the said rivers, and so forward up into the new land westward, until three-score miles be finished from the first entrance of the aforesaid rivers and half-way over, that is to say, in the midst of the said two rivers." The grantees were authorised to "establish such government on the said portions of lands and islands * * * as shall be agreeable as near as may be to the laws and customs of the realm of England."[1]

The first white settlement in the present bounds of New Hampshire, of which we have indisputable evidence, was that of David Thomson in 1623. A native of Scotland, he settled at

(1) Burrage: Beginnings of Colonial Maine, 166-167; N. H. Provincial Papers, I., 10-15.

Little Harbor, now the town of Rye, and built a house at Odiorne's Point. He held a patent from the Council for New England. In three years, he removed to an island in the harbour of Boston.[2]

About the same time, Edward and William Hilton, and a few others, appear to have gone up the river, where they planted the settlement of Colchester, afterwards known as Dover.[3] It is a reasonable conjecture that the majority of these early settlers were members of the Church of England.

An amicable agreement was reached, November 7th, 1629, between the grantees of seven years before, by which the territory was divided. Captain Mason received the land between the Merrimac and the Piscataqua; and to that tract he gave the name of New Hampshire. The rest of the grant, that is, the territory between the Piscataqua and the Kennebec, extending from the coast up into the land, remained in the possession of Gorges; it was known as the province of Maine.[4]

The Laconia Company received its first grant on the 17th of November, the same year. That company was an incorporated association of nine persons, whose objects were trading in furs, sending cargoes of Indian truck-goods to the Piscataqua, and trade with the Indians.[5] The corporation sent over colonists the following year; and the house formerly occupied by Thomson was occupied by them. Not far away, in what is now Porstmouth, "Mason Hall" or the "Great House" was built.[6] Other settlers followed; and trading stations were established. Strawberry Bank was initiated by Neal, Gibbons, and others, who arrived in 1630. Its inhabitants belonged principally to the Church of England. By written agreement, forty-one of them set apart fifty acres of land for a glebe, and committed the same to two church-wardens in trust.[7] The name of Portsmouth was not given to Strawberry Bank till 1653.

(2) N. H. State Papers, XXV., 722-723; Fry: N. H. as a Royal Province, 33; Winsor: Narrative and Critical History, III., 326.
(3) N. H. Provincial Papers, I., 118; Batchelder: Eastern Diocese, I., 133-134.
(4) Farnham Papers, I., 95-98; N. H. Hist. Soc. Collns., I., 304.
(5) Winsor: Narrative and Critical History, III., 327.
(6) *Ibid.*
(7) *Ibid.*, III., 327-329.

The presence of so many Anglicans was regarded by the officials of Massachusetts with apprehension; and Lord Say, Lord Brook, and other influential Puritans purchased the Hilton patent in 1632.[8] Promptly a Puritan immigration followed; and "a worthy Puritan divine" appeared on the scene. He was soon compelled to leave, however, for lack of adequate support. There were other ministers and some laymen who arrived.[9]

Still the Church of England had an existence in New Hampshire, though small and humble. The inventories of the property of the settlers at "Newitchwanicke" and "Pascattaquack" attest the churchmanship of the settlers as early as July, 1630; there we find enumerated one psalter, one communion cup and cover of silver, one small communion-table cloth, and two service books. In July, 1635, a plantation at Piscataway and Niwechewanock possessed "For Religious Use," the following articles:-"1 great bible, 12 service books, 1 pewter fflaggon, 1 communion cup and cover of silver, 2 fine table cloths, 2 napkins."[10] That equipment was evidently sent over by Captain Mason and used in the Strawberry Bank Church.[11]

Captain Mason was a staunch member of the English Church. At his death, in 1635, he left by will a thousand acres of land "for and towards the maintenance of an honest, godly, and religious preacher of God's word, in some church or chapple, or other public place appointed for divine worship and service within the said county of New Hampshire." He also made a bequest for the support of a grammar-school; and to him belongs the distinction of the first bequests for religious or educational purposes in New England.[12]

Captain Mason had advocated the establishment of a viceregal government in New England. Such a suggestion was not calculated to increase his popularity. Certainly his ecclesiastical affiliations irritated the officials of the Massachusetts Bay

(8) Fry: N. H. as a Royal Province, 34.
(9) Winsor: Narrative and Critical History, III., 326.
(10) N. H. Provincial Papers, I., 78, 80, 115-116; Perry: American Episcopal Church, I., 102.
(11) Batchelder: Eastern Diocese, I., 134.
(12) Perry: American Episcopal Church, I., 101; N. H. Provincial Papers, I., 43; Dean: Capt. John Mason (Prince Society), 397-408.

colony. Governor John Winthrop. uncompromising in his Puritan position, said of Mason, after his death, that "he was the chief mover in all the attempts against us, and was to have sent the general governor, and for this end was providing shipping; but the Lord in mercy taking him away, all the business fell in sleep."[13] The passing away of such an influential Anglican was really regarded as a divine intervention by the neighboring colony. Yet the more sober judgment of recent years takes note of Mason's admirable qualities. "But for the religious and political prejudice of the times, and especially the Puritanic element of New England, his fame had long since spread far and wide."[14]

An ordained clergyman of the Church of England arrived in Maine on the 24th of May, 1636. The Reverend Richard Gibson matriculated at Magdalen College, Cambridge, in 1627.[15] He was sent to minister to a fishing plantation which belonged to Robert Trelawny, one of the largest land-owners of colonial New England; and he was probably associated with John Winter, who went to Richmond Island as the representative of the Trelawny interests. On July 10th, 1639, Winter wrote Trelawny that Gibson was going to "Pascattaway to be their mynister, & they give him £60 per yeare, & build him a house, & Cleare him some ground, & prepare yt for him against he Com."[16] Mr. Gibson was described by Winter as "a very fair Condition man, & one that doth keep himselfe in very good order, & Instructs our people well, yf please God to give us the grace to follow his Instruction."[17] But Governor Winthrop naturally resented the newcomer as a trespasser, and declared that he was "wholly addicted to the hierarchy and discipline of England and exercised his ministerial function according to the ritual."[18]

Some of the men under Winter's supervision had a disagreement with their chief; and, as a result, repaired to New Hampshire, to fish for themselves.[19] They built at Strawberry Bank a

(13) Winthrop's Journal, I., 181.
(14) Tuttle's memoir, in Dean: Capt. John Mason (Prince Society), 30.
(15) Information furnished by Chas. H. Batchelder of Portsmouth, N. H.
(16) *Ibid.*, 171
(17) *Ibid.*, 86-87.
(18) Winthrop's Journal, II., 66.
(19) Trelawny Papers, 92-93.

parsonage-house, a chapel, and other appurtenances; and Gibson was chosen as their parson.[20]

The first Church in what is now Portsmouth was built as early as 1638.[21] Fifty acres had been set aside for a glebe;[22] and on the 25th of May, 1640, the Governor and assistants of New Hampshire granted the fifty acres to Thomas Walford and Henry Sherburne, church-wardens, and their successors, for the purposes of church, parsonage, and glebe. It was recited in the instrument that they have given towards the building, erecting, and founding of a parsonage-house with chapel, and that they have made choice of Richard Gibson as first parson.[23]

Of Gibson's work we know little, although he seems to have been a good scholar, a popular speaker, and a man highly esteemed. When the New Hampshire settlers submitted to the Massachusetts government, in 1641, steps were taken by the Boston authorities to put an end to his ministry. The fishermen of the Isles of Shoals had held out persistently against the Puritan rulers of the Bay; and Gibson evidently encouraged them. He was accused of "scandalyzing the government there, and denying their title," and was ordered to appear before the General Court. He was charged with marrying and baptising at the Isles of Shoals, the southern part being under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts; thus he had shown his disrespect to the authority of the Bay colony. First committed to gaol, next brought to trial, the first Anglican minister of New Hampshire was discharged "upon his submission and in consideration of his being a stranger and intending to leave the country."[24]

No one was appointed to succeed Mr. Gibson. The new government desired to exterminate the lingering traces of Episcopacy; and the power acquired by Massachusetts over the New Hampshire territory was used to crush out all tendencies towards "the hierarchy and discipline of the Church of England."[25] The

(20) Burrage: Beginnings of Colonial Maine, 301.
(21) Brewster: Rambles about Portsmouth, 346.
(22) Fry: N. H. as a Royal Province, 29.
(23) N. H. Provincial Papers, I., 111-113; Batchelder: Eastern Diocese, I., 134-136.
(24) Burrage: Beginnings of Colonial Maine, 302: Winthrop: History of New England, II., 79-80; Fry: N. H. as a Royal Province, 29-30.
(25) Winthrop: History of New England, II., 79.

chapel, parsonage, and glebe remained for a while unoccupied; later they were assigned to Puritan missionary ministers sent to Portsmouth, and at last they passed into the possession of the Reverend Joshua Moody, the first regularly settled Puritan minister there.[26] Organised Anglican worship was extinct in New Hampshire for the next ninety years.

During that long period we find occasional reminders of the existence of the English Church. On the 18th of September, 1679, New Hampshire was constituted a separate province with a government of its own, vested in a president and council appointed by the King and an assembly chosen by the people.[27] By the royal commission which established this government, liberty of conscience was allowed to all Protestants, and it was stipulated that "those of the Church of England were to be particularly encouraged."

But in the unsettled condition that prevailed in the province, due to disputes, contests about proprietorship and land-titles, misrule, and Indian wars, little advantage could be taken by the Church of its privileges.[28]

In 1679, the Reverend Robert Jordan died at Portsmouth, at the age of sixty-eight.[29] Jordan had arrived in Maine about 1640, and had taken the place of Gibson when he moved to New Hampshire.[30] He was a graduate of Balliol College, Oxford.[31] While in Maine, he did missionary work at Scarboro, Casco (now Portland), and Saco;[32] he also married the daughter of John Winter, and became one of the wealthiest men of the colony.[33] Mr. Jordan was opposed to the authority of the Massachusetts Bay colony, and in consequence he was imprisoned at Boston in 1663. During King Philip's War, his house was attacked by savages; and he took refuge on Great Island (now Newcastle), near Portsmouth.[34] There is no evidence of his ministerial activity during his residence in New Hampshire.

(26) Fry: N. H. as a Royal Province, 30.
(27) Encyclopaedia Britannica (14th ed.) XVI., 304.
(28) Batchelder: Eastern Diocese, I., 140.
(29) *Ibid.*, 13.
(30) Trelawny Papers, 287.
(31) Burrage: Beginnings of Colonial Maine, 305-306.
(32) Perry: American Episcopal Church, I., 104.
(33) *Ibid.*
(34) *Ibid.*, I., 107.

Edward Cranfield was appointed lieutenant-governor of New Hampshire, May 9th, 1682, and took the oath of office on the 10th of October. He favoured the settlement of the Church of England; and soon after his installation (December 1st, 1682), he wrote the Committee of Trade and Foreign Plantations, from Portsmouth, regarding his arrival and reception, and remarked that "the attempting to settle the way of the Church of England, I perceive, will be very grievous to the people." He had observed that they were "very diligent and devout in attending in that mode of worship which they have been brought up in," and were "very tenacious of it."[35] Realising at length the preponderance of Congregational influence, in subsequent letters he discouraged the introduction of the English Church. Still, he sought to secure an entering wedge of Anglican custom in the observance of January 30th, the day of King Charles's execution, and Christmas.

An order was secured in Council that after the 1st of January, 1684, ministers should admit all persons of suitable years and not vicious to communion, and their children to baptism; also, that "if any person should desire baptism or the other sacrament to be administered according to the liturgy of the Church of England, it should be done in pursuance of the King's command to the colony of Massachusetts; and any minister refusing so to do should suffer the penalty of the statutes of uniformity."[36]

The new governor notified the Reverend Joshua Moody, the dissenting minister at Portsmouth, that he would partake of the Lord's Supper on Sunday, and requested that the same be administered with the liturgy of the Church of England. The minister refused to comply; whereupon he was imprisoned and, shortly afterwards, released. Cranfield's term ended in 1685.

From 1686 to 1689, New Hampshire formed a part of the Dominion of New England, which was placed under Sir Edmund Andros as governor general. Governor Andros's Anglican sympathies are well known. In 1692, the royal government was established; and during the rest of the colonial period, New Hampshire was separate from Massachusetts. From 1699 to 1741, the two colonies shared the same governor.

(35) Jenness: Transcripts of Original Documents of N. H., 126.
(36) Belknap: New Hampshire, I., 105.

In spite of the opposition of the Independents, the Church of England showed unmistakable signs of growth towards the end of the Seventeenth Century, in the northeastern colonies. A good-sized congregation was formed at Boston; soon houses of worship were being erected. About the beginning of the new century, the apprehensions of the old residents became very pronounced. The prestige accorded the Church by colonial governors convinced the rock-ribbed Puritans, who had grown accustomed to having their own way unmolested, that a new force was in their midst. Doctor Cotton Mather, the eminent divine, took pains to warn his people against the encroachment. Several pamphlets and a large number of sermons were directed towards stemming the tide of Anglicanism.

The Report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for the year 1705 mentions New Hampshire as a field of English Church missionary enterprise. In speaking of the efforts made by the Venerable Society to strengthen the cause of the Church in New England, it records that assistance was given to a minister on the Isles of Shoals, "upon the Spot," of £20 for one year, by the Society. The Report further states that there had been a request for one minister for New Hampshire, and that the applicants had promised "They'll do their best to maintain him."[37] There was doubtless very little accomplished in that field.

It was in 1732 that the Church of England was once more introduced into the province. The circumstances had grown more and more favourable. Many men of character and wealth, who were members of the Church, had become residents of Portsmouth; and David Dunbar, lieutenant-governor of New Hampshire, was one of the most active factors in forming the congregation.[38] That year, a church was erected on the high ground overlooking the river — a very neat building.

A good deal of assistance was rendered by Captain John Thomlinson, a London merchant well known in the colony as a sea-commander and as New Hampshire's agent in London. He lent his influence to securing financial aid in England.[39]

(37) S. P. G. Sermon and Abstract, 1705.
(38) Mass. Hist. Society Collections, Series I., Vol. X., 57.
(39) *Ibid.*; Belknap: New Hampshire, I., 234.

Queen Caroline presented the new church with a folio prayer book, a service of communion silver, a christening basin, and two mahogany chairs. The edifice was appropriately called Queen's Chapel; and it was opened in 1734.[40] It may be observed in this connection, that the chapel was burned in 1806, and that St. John's Church, which occupies the same site, retains the old silver, the prayer book, and one of the chairs.[41]

On the 26th of December, 1734, the Church of England adherents wrote the Bishop of London, who was virtually the diocesan of the American colonies, that they had erected a church; that services had been held in it by the Reverend Arthur Browne, to the great satisfaction of themselves and the dissenters; also, that there had been no friction between the dissenters and themselves. They were desirous of Mr. Browne as their regular minister.[42]

The same day, they wrote the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts — that is today the S. P. G. — that their church was not yet completely finished, but that it was suitable for services. They asked for help. They reminded the Society that theirs was the only town of trade or commerce in the government where strangers ever resorted; that many people were inclined to embrace the Church. They were anxious for Mr. Browne; and should he be sent, he might officiate for some thirty families across the river at Kittery.[43]

Lieutenant-Governor Dunbar added a letter of endorsement, in which he told the Bishop of London that there was great need of a minister at Portsmouth, where many people were well disposed towards the Church of England. Last summer, he said, a congregation within three miles, on the other side of the Piscataqua river, declared their allegiance to the Church of England, and delivered their meeting-house and themselves to the Reverend Matthias Plant, the S. P. G. missionary at Newbury, Massachusetts. The Reverend Mr. Browne had made several visits and had impressed the people favourably; and Governor Dunbar

(40) Batchelder: Eastern Diocese, I., 140-141.
(41) Lucius Waterman: How our Church came to N. H. (Morehouse).
(42) Fulham MSS., N. Y., R. I., &c., #54 (Stevens & Brown L. C. Trans.)
(43) S. P. G. Letter Book (Hawks Trans.).

was pleased with his happy manner. "He is followed many miles wherever he preaches." But since Mr. Browne's home was at Providence, a distance of a hundred and twenty miles, he could not render frequent services.[44]

On Ascension day, 1735, and the following Sunday, the Reverend Timothy Cutler of Christ Church, Boston, preached at Portsmouth "to a considerable congregation." The lieutenant-governor was present; and he and twenty others received the holy communion. It was reported to the S. P. G. that "there is a great Prospect of a numerous Congregation there."[45]

The enthusiasm of the Portsmouth churchmen was undoubtedly aroused. A few days later, the 5th of July, 1735, a committee of the Church of England members of the town wrote Captain Thomlinson that they appreciated his efforts to secure the appointment of Mr. Browne as their minister. Since nearly a hundred and fifty families stood ready to embrace the Church, Portsmouth afforded a better field than Providence. Hence, they hoped that the King would appoint Mr. Browne his chaplain in their government. Captain Thomlinson was asked to remind the S. P. G. to send over some tracts and prayer books for distribution.[46]

Mr. Browne was invited by the principal church-members of Portsmouth to become their rector, on the 18th of August, 1735.[47] Next year, he took charge of the chapel. In the meantime, the building neared completion, and the prospect of a settled minister encouraged the people to go forward with their efforts.

(44) Fulham MSS., N. Y., R. I., &c., #53 (Stevens & Brown L. C. Trans.).
(45) S. P. G. Abstract, 1736, pp. 40-41.
(46) Hawks Transcript.
(47) Batchelder: Eastern Diocese, I., 143.

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